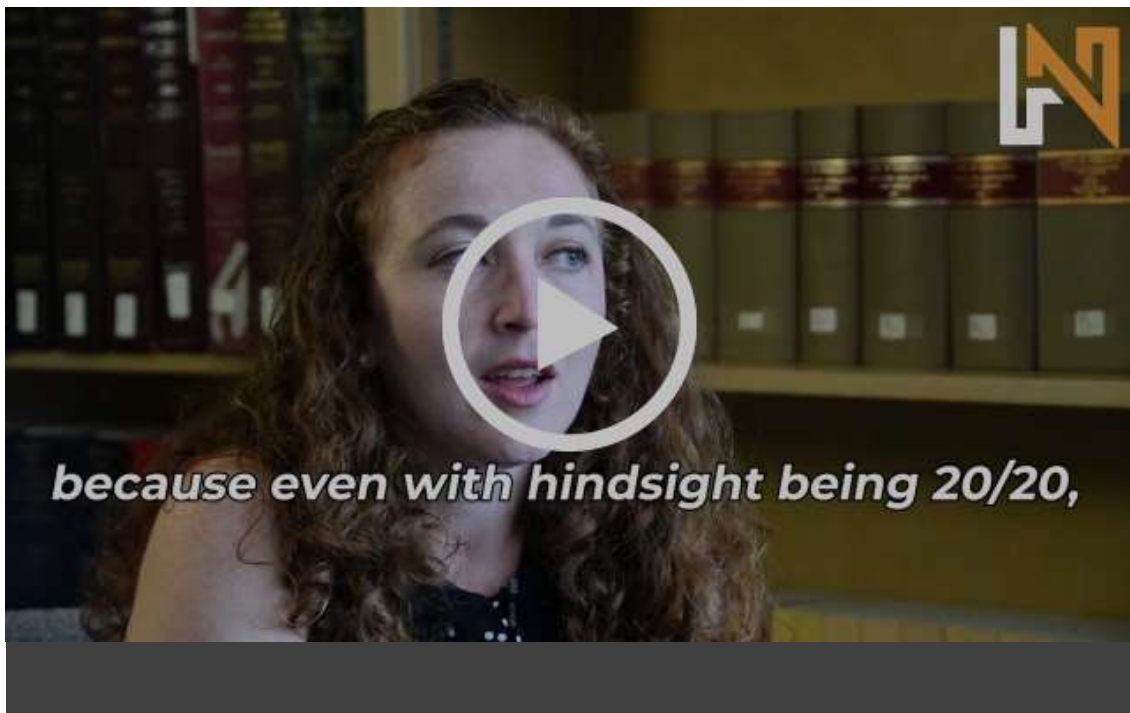




## New video tells story of "bootlegger queen"



"Queen Louise" Vinciguerra thumbed her nose at the law through the Prohibition era, usually avoiding punishment despite frequent arrests across the state. Writer Kylie Kinley talks about Louise, bootlegging, and Prohibition in this new five-minute video.

Would you do us a favor? Share this

with your friends. Forward this email, or share the video via social media. We're going to be doing more of these. It's part of our effort to reach more people with more history.

Speaking of more history, Kylie tells the full story of Queen Louise in the Summer 2018 issue of *Nebraska History*. [Read an excerpt here.](#)



# Young Writers' Workshop

## East vs. West!

Join us for a statewide two-day East vs. West writing workshop for budding middle school authors! Meet with like-minded middle school students and learn from some great Nebraska authors.

The [Eastern workshop](#) will take place at the Nebraska History Museum (131 Centennial Mall N) in Lincoln, while the [Western workshop](#) will be at the Scottsbluff Public Library (1809 3rd Ave) in Scottsbluff. The workshop will run from 9 am to 4 pm both days.

Students in the Eastern workshop will work with UNL English professor and award-winning poet Grace Bauer and with Richard Graham, a UNL associate professor whose work focuses on using comics and graphic novels as educational tools.

Students in the Western workshop will work with author and *Scottsbluff Star-Herald* reporter Irene North.

Click the links above to learn more and to register!

## Varieties of Nebraska Mud

Mud was the curse of early travel and of pre-pavement rural and city life. We've told that story before, but here we'll show you how not all muddy situations are the same. Through a selection of our historical photos, we present this lighthearted slog through some of the [varieties of Nebraska mud](#).



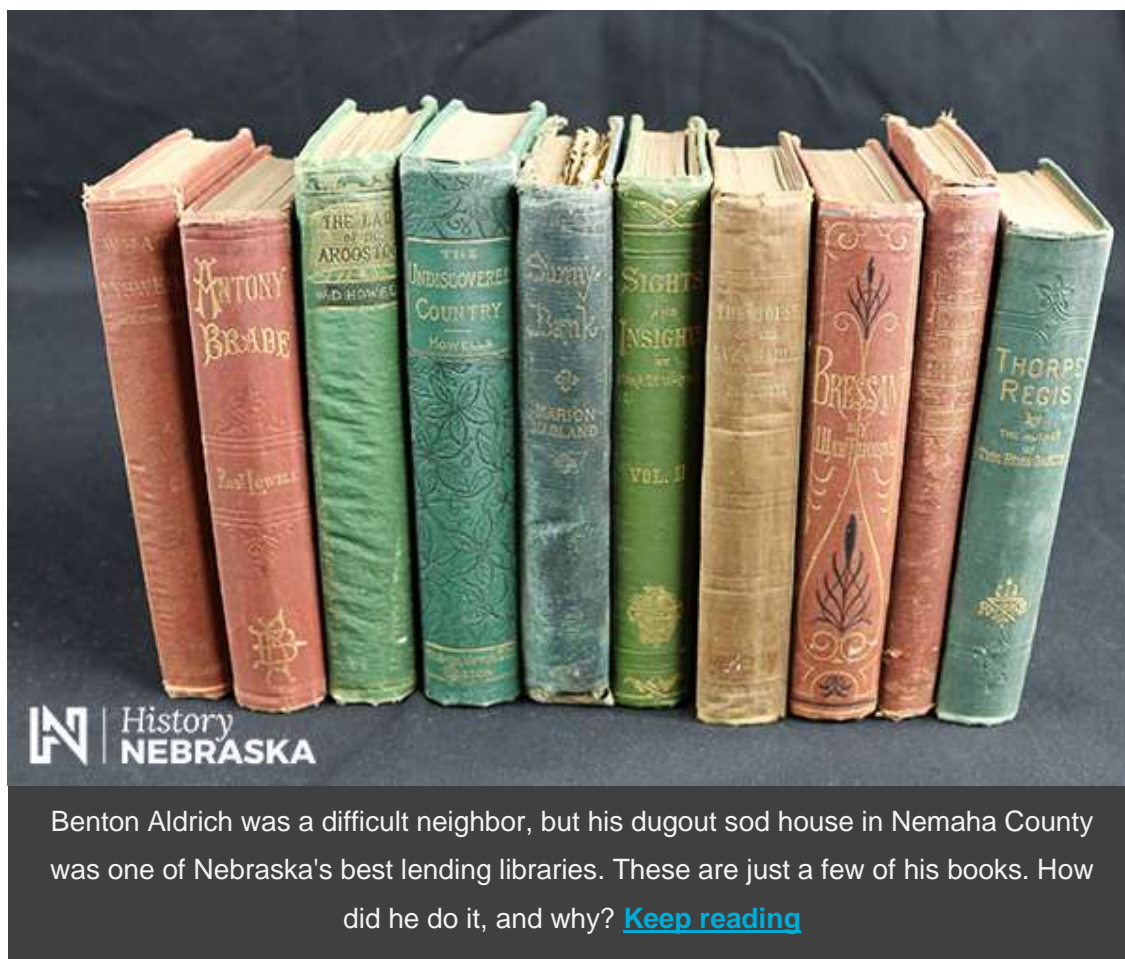
**Mari Sandoz** was a broke, unknown writer when she lived at 12th and J Street in Lincoln--but her life was about to change. A new historical marker tells the story. Watch this half-minute video and then [read the marker here](#). (Better yet, explore them all with our free [historical marker app](#).)



## Nebraska's on the money!

Did you know the word “Nebraska” is on your money? (And not just the quarter.) It’s on one particular bill that’s probably in your wallet. Can you find it? Hint #1: Does this photo help? [Keep reading](#), but check your money first!



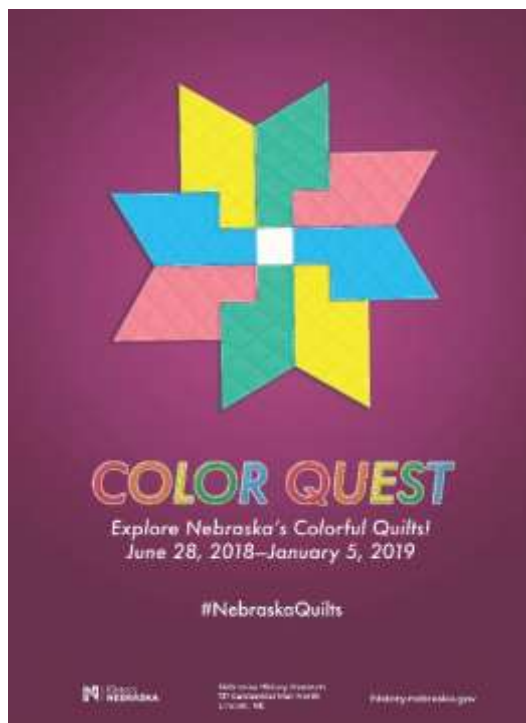


Benton Aldrich was a difficult neighbor, but his dugout sod house in Nemaha County was one of Nebraska's best lending libraries. These are just a few of his books. How did he do it, and why? [Keep reading](#)

## July Events

Join us at the Nebraska History Museum for:

- July 2, Noon History Bites, “The Unseen Side of Quilts” by curator Laura Mooney.
- July 19, Brown Bag Lecture, “Famous Nebraskans You’ve Never Heard Of,” by Jim McKee.
- Free Family Fun Day on July 21.



[Keep reading](#)



*History Nebraska* (formerly *Nebraska History News*), July 2018 (Vol. 71, No. 7), David Bristow, Editor

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(Formerly the Nebraska State Historical Society)

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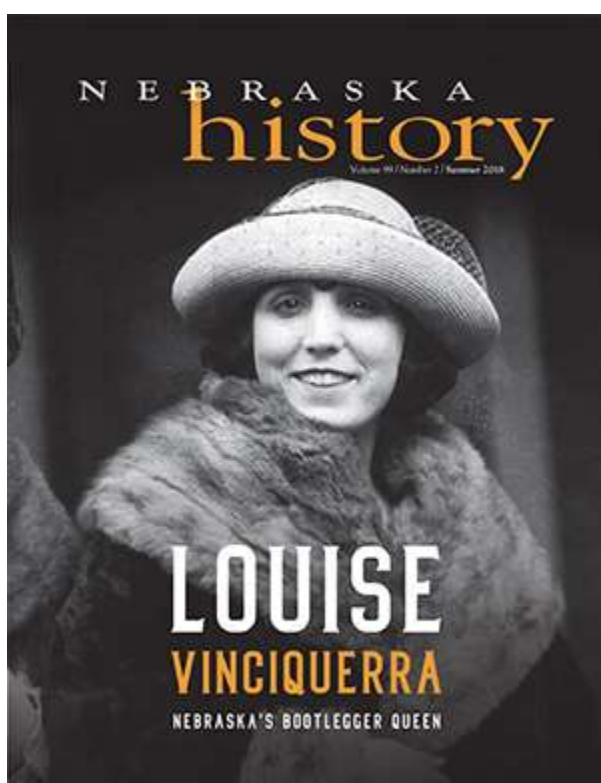
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Complete articles:

# Louise Vinciguerra, Nebraska's Bootlegger Queen

May 22, 2018



“Queen Louise” thumbed her nose at the law throughout the Prohibition era, usually avoiding punishment despite frequent arrests across the state. Her story provides new insight into crime boss Tom Dennison’s Omaha, and shows how a woman could exercise power in the underworld. Kylie Kinley tells the story in the Summer 2018 issue of *Nebraska History*.

History Nebraska members received the issue as part of their [membership](#); single issues are available for \$7 from the Nebraska History Museum (402-471-3447). Here’s an excerpt:

On the afternoon of October 17, 1925, a Ford Sedan careened through the neighborhood of 27<sup>th</sup> and D Streets in Lincoln, Nebraska. “Queen” Louise Vinciguerra sat in the passenger seat with



two gallons of illegal moonshine whiskey on her lap. Her future second husband, ex-Prohibition agent Earl Haning, was at the wheel. A mutual acquaintance named Joseph Holder crouched in the back seat with the burlap sacks that had hidden the jugs only moments earlier. Karl Schmidt, a federal prohibition agent for Nebraska, pursued them for over a mile through Lincoln neighborhoods and finally edged his car closer.

The trio knew they were caught.

Vinciguerra picked up the jugs and smashed them one after the other against the car's interior. Broken glass sliced her hand, and the moonshine soaked into her dress. Haning stopped the car, and when Agent Schmidt wrenched open the car door, the whiskey ran down the running boards and seeped from Vinciguerra's skirt. Schmidt borrowed an empty milk bottle from a neighborhood housewife, mopped up what evidence he could, and arrested Haning and Vinciguerra on a charge of conspiracy to violate the prohibition laws.



Haning and Vinciguerra were convicted in March 1926, but served no time and won on appeal in 1927. Joseph Holder served as a government witness and was not charged. At first Vinciguerra said she was on her way to a Nebraska football game. Later she said she was in Lincoln to get a suit of clothes for her brother. Either way, she claimed that she met Haning unexpectedly while waiting for a streetcar. Her defense was that she couldn't have conspired to violate prohibition laws because she had no idea the moonshine was in the car. Her lawyer argued that the car chase and consequent breaking of the jugs prevented Louise's transportation and since transportation was the sole reason why she had entered Haning's car, no conspiracy had been committed. Consequently, Federal Judge Walter Henry Sanborn of the Court of Appeals for the Eight Circuit, reversed their conviction.

So Vinciguerra and her lover Haning went free, and no one was surprised.

Louise Vinciguerra was the queen of Nebraska bootleggers, and she bribed, argued, or charmed her way out of court more times before she was thirty than many male bootleggers did in their entire careers. The authorities and her peers often underestimated her because she was a woman, and she swindled them appropriately. She was a mother of two, a shrewd businesswoman, a champion for her family members, a habitual criminal, and a ruthless human being.

\* \* \* \* \*

Kinley goes on to tell of Vinciguerra's numerous arrests across the state, her involvement in a fatal shooting of a man by her sister-in-law, the bloody feud between two of her ex-husbands, her courtroom testimony against Omaha crime boss Tom Dennison, and the mysterious circumstances of her death. It's a fresh look at underworld life in Prohibition-era Nebraska.

For more about Prohibition-era bootlegging, read "[The Art of Making Moonshine](#)."

Categories:

[Prohibition](#), [crime](#), [bootlegging](#), [women](#)

# Varieties of Nebraska Mud

June 27, 2018



Mud was the curse of pioneer travel and of pre-pavement rural and city life. We've [told that story elsewhere](#). This time we want to show you that not all muddy situations are the same. Through a selection of our historical photos, we present this lighthearted slog through some of the varieties of Nebraska mud.

## Neighborly mud



Getting a driver unstuck near Bancroft, Nebraska, ca. 1910s. Tire chains and a tow chain were standard equipment for rural auto travel. Few roads were even graveled in the early twentieth century. RG3334-1-56

### **Capitol mud**



Mud wasn't just for backroads. Here's the old state capitol (on the site of the present capitol) in about 1898. RG2158-12-20

**Stoic-but-kind-of-forlorn mud**



The Elmer Ball family, Woods Park (Custer County), Nebraska, 1886. Photo by Solomon Butcher.

Really? This was the best place for a family photo? But think about it. There's no electricity, and the thick-walled sod house is crowded and dimly-lit inside. And if you look past the mud, you'll notice that the family's clothes are clean, the children have shoes, and the soddie looks square and well-built. The family obviously went to some trouble to show their home and their horse in the photo. RG2608-1069

### **Hilly mud**





Omaha began paving downtown streets in 1883, but it took decades to pave the whole city—and the poorest residential neighborhoods were low priorities. This view is to the south from 18th

and S Streets on October 29, 1922. The heavily-rutted 18<sup>th</sup> Street rises from a valley and is crossed by board walkways over the mud. RG2941-7

### High-class mud



Before cities were paved, even wealthier residents dealt with muddy streets and precarious wooden crossings. This is Lincoln, circa 1900. RG3474-6895

### Patriotic mud



A World War I parade in Wahoo, 1917 or 1918. Cheer up, fellas—the mud’s going to be a lot deeper in France. RG2963-1-3

**Put-away-that-stupid-camera-and-help mud**



We're not sure where this is, but the car has a 1920s Nebraska license plate. Scenes like this show why many farmers were early supporters of the "[Good Roads Movement](#)." During a rainy spell, farm-to-market roads could be impassible for days or weeks at a time. RG3021-9-2

### **Rutted mud**





Even before gravel and pavement, local road crews tried to identify and improve poorly-drained spots like this one in Kearney County, shown circa 1915. But it wasn't easy, because the state and federal governments still had little involvement in road improvement. RG3474-1681

### Race car mud



This the best kind of mud, at least as far as dirt-track stock car racers were concerned. But flying mud stuck to cars and impaired visibility, so drivers installed wire mesh screens in place of windshields and radiator grilles. RG5705-6-25



This last photo is part of a large collection of 1950s-60s racing photos by Harold Mauck of Plainview, Nebraska. It's part of a new exhibit that opens August 25, 2018, at the Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln. In addition to photos, we're partnering with the Speedway Motors Museum of American Speed to bring in objects and even a few cars. Stay tuned to hear more about *Start Your Engines: Nebraska Stock Car Racing Photographs by the Harold Mauck Studio*. In the meantime, enjoy a few of Mauck's [racing photos](#).

—David Bristow, Editor

Categories:

[mud](#), [roads](#), [sod house](#), [transportation](#)

# "Nebraska" is on the money!

June 26, 2018

**Did you know the word "Nebraska" is on your money? It's on one particular bill that's probably in your wallet. Can you find it?**

Hint #1:

It's right here. Does this help?



Stumped? Scroll down for another hint.

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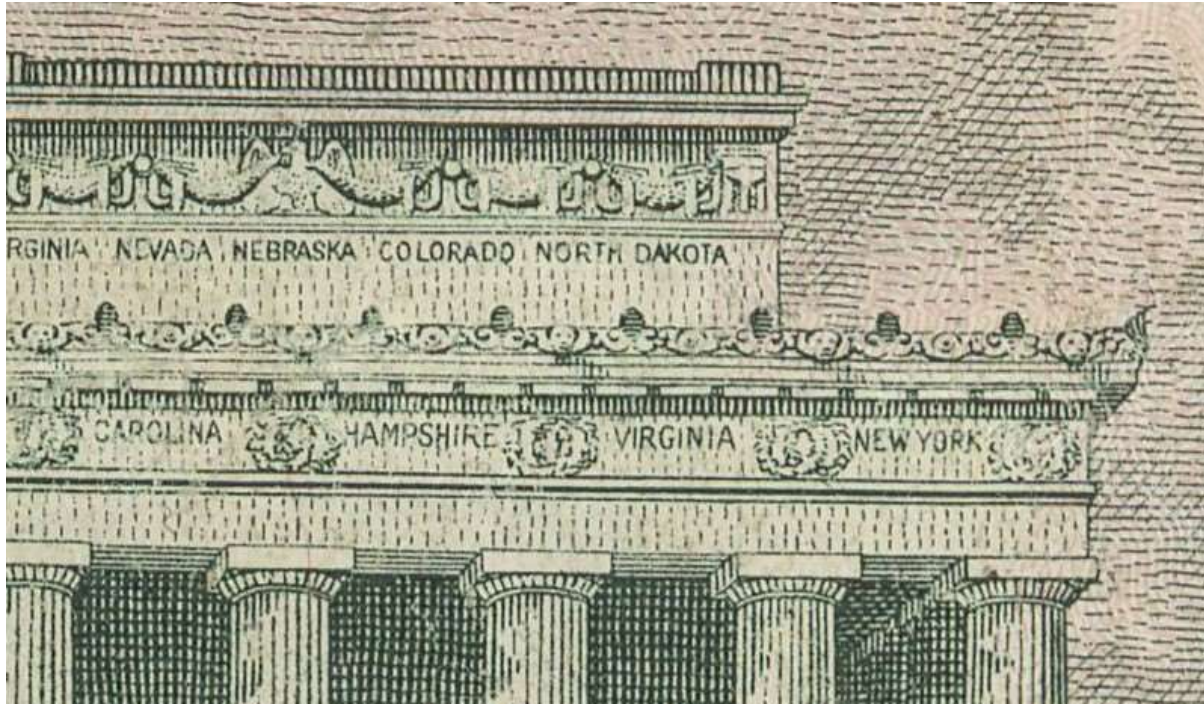
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Keep scrolling for the answer below:

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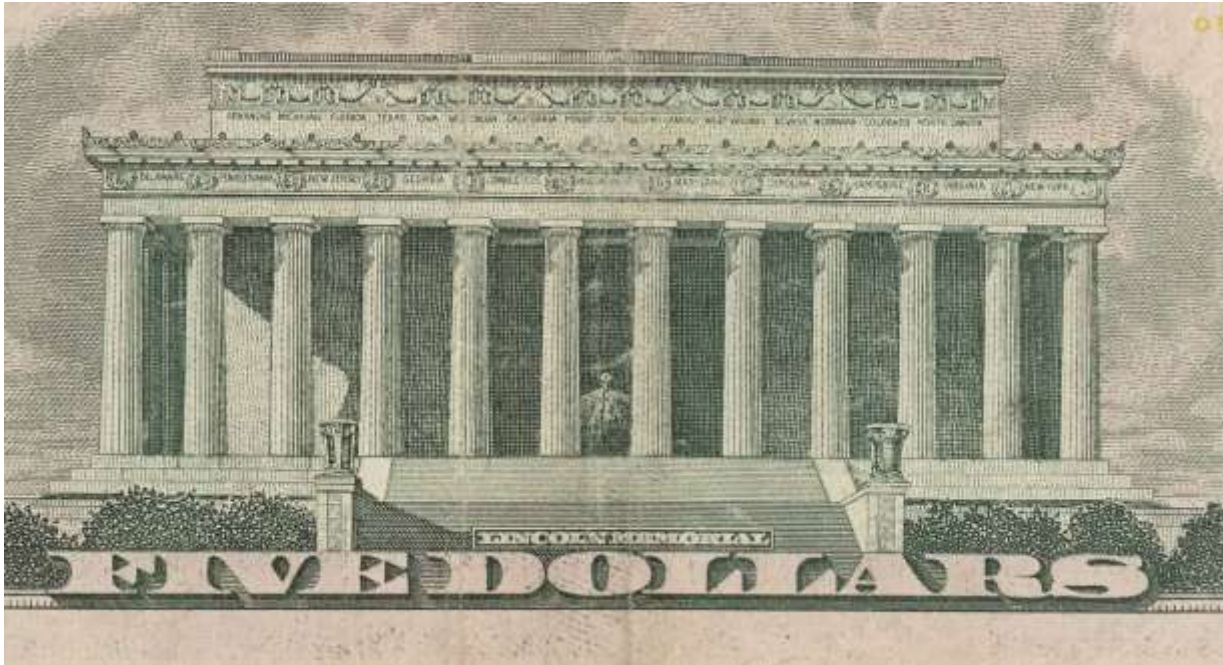
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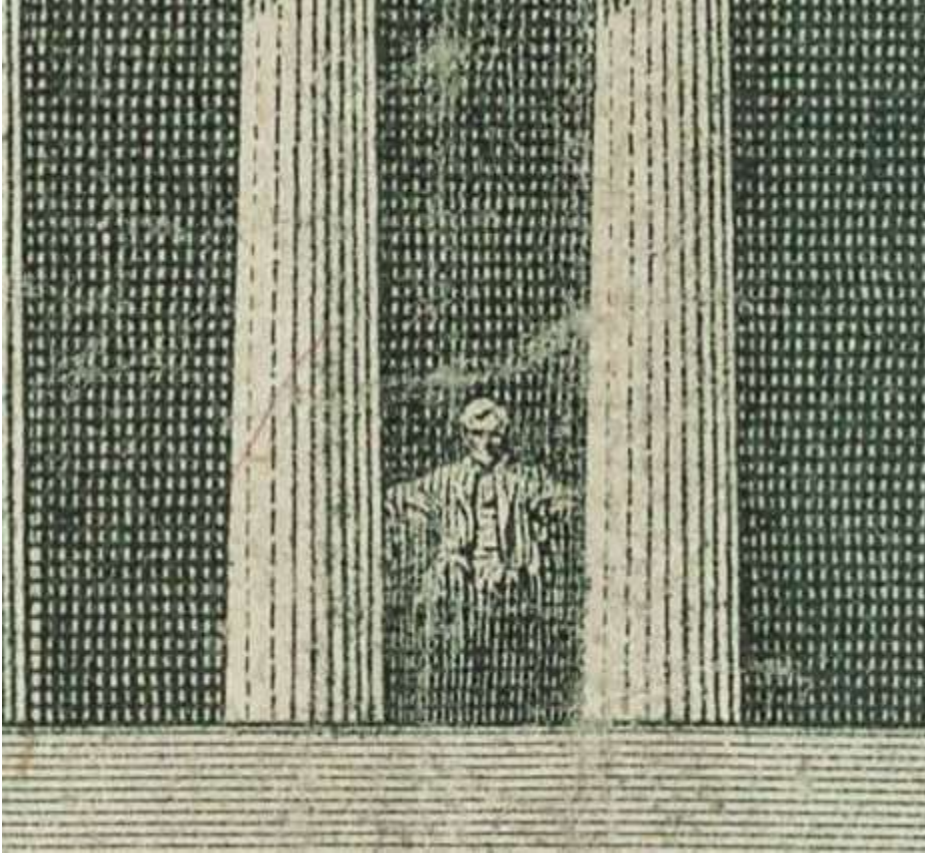
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Answer: It's on the back of the \$5 bill. The names of the states are engraved on the Lincoln Memorial.

OK, now you know something you can bother your friends with. But take a look at the famous Lincoln statue visible between the pillars.



This leads to a second question:

**Nebraska has a statue of Abraham Lincoln by the same sculptor who created the famous seated Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. Do you know where Nebraska's Lincoln is? Scroll down for a hint.**

v

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Hint: Come on, now. Which city would have something about *Lincoln*?

v



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Lincoln's in Lincoln. The statue by Daniel Chester French stands on the west side of the State Capitol. It was dedicated in 1912. (French completed his statue for the Lincoln Memorial in



1920.) Here's the dedication of the Nebraska statue. It's still there, but the state capitol itself has been replaced! (Photo: History Nebraska RG863-4-1)

--David L. Bristow, Editor

Categories:

[Abraham Lincoln; Lincoln; money; art](#)

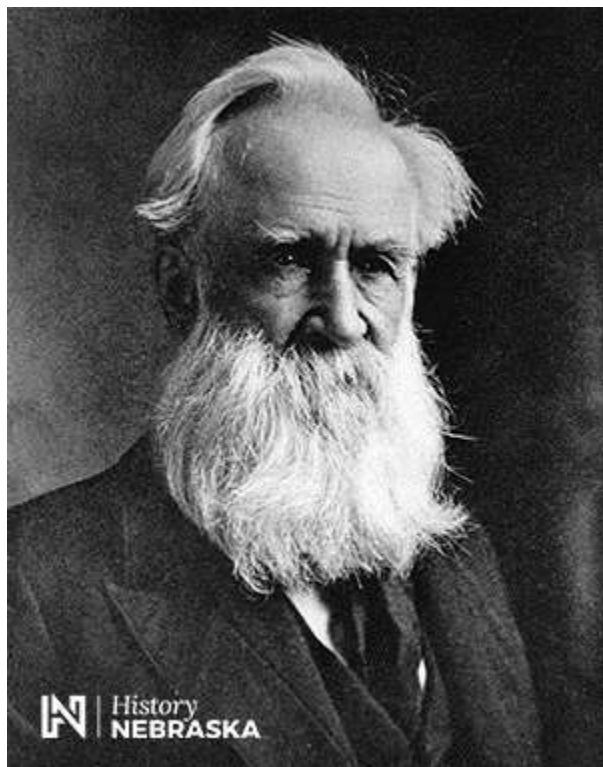
# Benton Aldrich was a difficult neighbor—but his dugout sod house was one of Nebraska's best libraries

June 27, 2018



Benton Aldrich was man who got on other people's nerves. He registered the deed to his Nemaha County farm in his wife's name so she could vote in school elections. He advocated for Darwinian evolution and refused to join a church. He [hired black farm workers](#) and paid them the same as whites (though he still held racist views). He feuded with neighbors over control of the local cemetery, and was remembered by one of his own granddaughters as pompous, narrow-minded, and bigoted.

But what a collection of books he had.



Aldrich believed that his rural Nemaha County community needed a first-class library, so in 1876 he organized the Clifton Library Association, a subscription lending library that for years rivaled the best libraries in Nebraska in both quantity and quality of books and periodicals. (This was before publicly-funded lending libraries were common.)

The 1882 printed catalog lists 678 titles in fifteen categories, including both popular books and the most important works in science, agriculture, and other fields of study. “It could have been a college library at the time, and probably contained volumes the not-much-larger fledgling Nebraska academic libraries would have liked to have in their collections,” writes John Irwin in the Summer 2018 issue of *Nebraska History*.

Remarkably, this impressive library was housed not on a university campus, but in the dugout sod home of an unschooled but highly educated farm family. Aldrich didn’t own all the books (though he was an avid collector). Members could loan their personal books, and member dues paid for new books and magazines to be owned in common. At its peak, Clifton Library had four branch locations up to 22 miles away. “It was in effect a county-wide library system,” Irwin writes.

Aldrich may have been hard to get along with at times, but he was committed to rural culture and education. The Clifton Library is part of the same cultural trends that produced the Lyceum and [Chautauqua](#) movements, both of which were dedicated to bringing culture and learning to all ages across rural America. Irwin and many like-minded people were serious about living out

Thomas Jefferson’s ideal of a nation of educated, independent farmers—even as the nation was becoming gradually more urban and industrialized.

For Aldrich, books and farming went together quite naturally. He was passionate about both, and was a pioneer in promoting “scientific farming” in the years before university-based agricultural extension programs.

Public libraries eventually replaced private subscription libraries. The Clifton Library books went back to their private owners, but some of them—including those pictured above—were later donated with [Aldrich’s papers](#) to History Nebraska.

Look for “A Farmer’s Passion for Knowledge: Benton Aldrich and the Clifton Library Association” in the Summer 2018 issue of *Nebraska History*.

History Nebraska members receive quarterly issues of *Nebraska History* as part of their [membership](#); single issues are available for \$7 from the Nebraska History Museum (402-471-3447).

—David L. Bristow, Editor

Categories:  
[libraries](#), [Nemaha County](#)